

Interview with: FRED WEISS

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Lily Jandrisevits

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript: Fred Weiss

Interviewee: Fred Weiss

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Summary: Fred Weiss, an early alumni of Marist College, talks about his experience attending Marist, including being an early member of the basketball team when it first formed. He reflects on his time on the team and his career at IBM. He also discusses the changes he has seen the college go through, and what brought him back as a volunteer at the school.

Fred Weiss ([00:00](#)):

Thank you.

Gus Nolan ([00:09](#)):

Today is Tuesday, July 1st, 2014. We have the honor of having Fred Weiss to come for this oral interview for the Marist Archives. Hi, Fred.

FW ([00:20](#)):

Good afternoon.

GN ([00:21](#)):

Yeah. Fred, this is, as I said, an oral interview, and we're using it along with some other sixty to eighty, I guess, interviews that we've had from a number of candidates from administrators and students and security guard. And our help here at Marist, trying to get a picture of the early days, what was Marist like in its formative years. So, we thought it would be good to get somebody like you who was around in those earlier years and get your impression now of what it was like then. And then make some comparison to where we are today. But for you first, something about yourself, just kind of a thumbnail if you would before Marist where were you born? Grade school, high school, family?

FW ([01:16](#)):

Well, I was born in Queens, Long Island. And my dad had always had an interest in moving his family out of the city. So, that took a few years to accomplish. And a couple of attempts, he first moved us up to Hudson, New York, and-- but he continued to work in New York City. So, it was a case where for the weekdays he was down there and my youngest mother with a few of the

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children at that point were trying to survive up in Claverack Hudson. That didn't last more than a year or so. The winters were rough. She didn't have a car, all that kind of stuff. So, we ended up relocating back to Queens. And then later he brought the family up to Clinton Hollow, know where that is. And that's where we stayed. And at the time that occurred, I was starting the third grade here. Prior to that, I was in parochial school down in Queens as a--.

GN ([02:10](#)):

Move on through grammar school. You stay there through the eighth grade?

FW ([02:14](#)):

Up here? Yeah. Well, up here, yes. Well, I went all the way through Roseville High School, too.

GN ([02:19](#)):

Oh, Roseville High School, okay.

FW ([02:19](#)):

During those days our elementary school was to sixth grade, and then we moved to the singular school, which was middle school and junior high and high school. So, I graduated actually from Roseville High School in 1958.

GN ([02:33](#)):

1958.

FW ([02:34](#)):

Right.

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GN ([02:34](#)):

Okay.

FW ([02:35](#)):

And I didn't go immediately to college or to Marist.

GN ([02:38](#)):

Okay. We're still in high school. Something about activities. Did you play sports? Did you have--

.

FW ([02:46](#)):

I did. Yeah. In the younger years, you know, I dabbled in many of them I did a little baseball for a year or two. I even did football as a ninth grader, I went out for basketball in the ninth grade, and I got cut. Didn't make the team and--.

GN ([03:02](#)):

Not big enough [laugh].

FW ([03:04](#)):

Well, I guess I just wasn't ready, you know, you got to always keep in mind in this kind of early conversation that we were out in Clinton Hollow, and we were a small farm family.

GN ([03:13](#)):

I see.

FW ([03:13](#)):

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And we didn't have a lot of supportive kinds of things, and we certainly didn't have the suburban community type of basketball facilities. So, our original basketball was either to literally some kind of--.

GN ([03:24](#)):

A basket [laugh].

FW ([03:24](#)):

A self-created basket, or in our case, it was even between a couple of branches of a tree that was shot through there, you know? So, I didn't make it in the first year, and the second year I didn't even go out for the team. But fortunately for me, our gym teacher was also the varsity basketball coach. So, he saw me developing, you know, athletically. And he encouraged me to come out as a junior. So, I did. And I played, I started right away and played two years at Whistle High School. And we did very well in our senior year. We were seventeen and one. And, we were very, very successful. And then I began to play basketball and softball, but mainly basketball in local town communities.

GN ([04:06](#)):

I see.

FW ([04:07](#)):

Leagues, I should say, in those years, it was some very, very good basketball out in the local community. The Y sponsored them, some of the industrial businesses sponsored teams. So that's kind of what I was doing, and I didn't know what I wanted to do academically, I guess at that point. I really didn't have a particular interest in going forward. And I have one older brother

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who was one year ahead of me, and I saw what was happening in his life. He actually went into the Air Force for, turned out to be a short time. He didn't like flying. So, he left and he went to Dutchess Community College didn't exist at that time, so he went to Westchester Community College, so about that time, and some other friends were talking about going on to college. And then the subject of Marist would come up in those kinds of conversations.

GN ([04:57](#)):

Give me a year. This is 1950, or there--?

FW ([04:59](#)):

Well, now it would've been 1960. That's when I started here at Marist.

GN ([05:02](#)):

Okay.

FW ([05:02](#)):

In the fall of 1960.

GN ([05:03](#)):

Okay.

FW ([05:03](#)):

So I was out from December, I mean, from June of '58 until before when I was working odd jobs in the area, different things, you know, construction and various other things.

GN ([05:16](#)):

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Now, the selecting of Marist, it was nearby and the competition wasn't so hard to get in.

FW ([05:24](#)):

That's correct. Yeah. I know. That'd be a greater challenge for me today [laugh].

GN ([05:27](#)):

Yeah. For all of us. Yeah. I taught here. I don't know that I could even get in now as a student, you know? So, things have changed. Alright. Give me a rundown of the campus. In other words, you did see other colleges I suppose and I'm a little surprised that Manhattan didn't make you an offer, or did they?

FW ([05:50](#)):

No, they did not.

GN ([05:51](#)):

They did not.

FW ([05:52](#)):

You know, I had interest expressed in me, but from pretty much upstate schools. I didn't know them well, Alfred was one I remember. And there were a couple of others up there too. No, you know, I just didn't have, I guess, enough of a--

GN ([06:11](#)):

Fire for that kind of thing to get into.

FW ([06:13](#)):



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Right, sort of credentials at that time to be sellable at that level of play.

GN ([06:17](#)):

Yeah, I see.

FW ([06:17](#)):

At the time.

GN ([06:18](#)):

But now coming to Marist, we were still rather primitive, were we not?

FW ([06:23](#)):

Well, very much so. Yes. Certainly. Just to start with the athletic side of it, there was very little in the form of any organized athletic programs.

GN ([06:32](#)):

Okay hold off there for just little bit. Let's go academically.

FW ([06:35](#)):

Okay. Sure.

GN ([06:35](#)):

I mean, did we have a classroom building yet? Was Donnelly up yet?

FW ([06:39](#)):

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You know, I'm trying to resurrect that timeframe in that regard. I think of it as being up. But I happen to look at the year to year site, what it says for the history. And I think they talk about 1962 is it opening, but I started here in fall, so there might have been a full year where maybe it wasn't finished yet.

GN ([06:57](#)):

Yeah. I see.

FW ([06:59](#)):

But I certainly remember, I do remember it being a dormitory, being attached to the cafeteria.

GN ([07:06](#)):

Absolutely.

FW ([07:06](#)):

The library, being teachers rooms, and our classrooms as well.

GN ([07:10](#)):

Yeah. It was the center of activity here.

FW ([07:13](#)):

Exactly.

GN ([07:14](#)):

And do you remember where the library was?

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FW ([07:17](#)):

Well, it had a couple homes, but I remember it downstairs over behind the chapel.

GN ([07:22](#)):

In Greystone. Yeah. Oh, later on. Yeah, when that--.

FW ([07:25](#)):

Before that, it was Greystone?

GN ([07:27](#)):

That was Greystone. Yeah.

FW ([07:29](#)):

Whether they ever moved it into Donnelly, I'm not sure. Do you--?

GN ([07:31](#)):

They did move it into Donnelly.

FW ([07:33](#)):

I thought so.

GN ([07:34](#)):

From Greystone to Donnelly. And then after they had finished the, construction of the chapel and the addition of the chapel, first of all, that was a refectory for the brothers were here, so they ate in the bottom half of it, and they studied in the upper half of it. And it was a big-- it wasn't filled

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in yet. They put the floor in between the first and second floor only when they decided to move the library over there. And I lost the track of the year for that.

FW ([08:06](#)):

Could I ask, I'm curious as to when you did your training here, and then--.

GN ([08:09](#)):

Okay.

FW ([08:09](#)):

When did you start?

GN ([08:10](#)):

I came to this campus in 1948 and I was a Marist brother in training. And I graduated from Marist College in June of 1952. And then in 1958, I was assigned to teach in Esopus, New York. The Marist Brothers had a training center there. And then about 1968, I came to campus here. During that time, I taught the nurses at St. Francis Hospital. There was a nursing school there.

FW ([08:46](#)):

Oh, I know it well, yeah.

GN ([08:47](#)):

And they had to have an academic program, and they called on great teachers to come and teach in it. So, I would-- volunteered [laugh].

FW ([08:56](#)):

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That was after I left then, in '68 when you came.

GN ([08:59](#)):

Yes. Alright, let's go back to the classes that you had. Were they big classes? Were they forty or thirty or sixty? Do you remember?

FW ([09:09](#)):

There were a couple of, like philosophy classes. I remember in the room and around there. I forgot what they called it, the tiered seating in Donnelly. And they would be bigger. I think of them as maybe being sixty or seventy. I was a math major for the first few years, and those classes were a bit smaller.

GN ([09:31](#)):

Who taught you math?

FW ([09:33](#)):

Well, I guess I had a few--.

GN ([09:35](#)):

Linus Foy, was he involved in teaching at the time?

FW ([09:38](#)):

Well, a little bit. I don't think I ever had him. I think my brother did for something.

GN ([09:43](#)):

Ritschdorff? John, Brother John Ritschdorff, that's not a name--.

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FW ([09:48](#)):

Not sure. A layman, Mr. Thomas.

GN ([09:50](#)):

Oh, yes.

FW ([09:51](#)):

First name escapes me. Rich-- no, that escapes me.

GN ([09:55](#)):

He came up from Manhattan, I think, or came up from New York.

FW ([09:58](#)):

There was an older brother, slight built man. But I forgot his name at the moment. I think

Richard Anselm taught us--.

GN ([10:10](#)):

Philosophy.

FW ([10:12](#)):

He did philosophy and history. But didn't he do a math or--.

GN ([10:14](#)):

He could have, yeah, he did statistics perhaps. And--.

FW ([10:17](#)):

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I think he might've, I might've had him for statistics, probability, or something like that. And of course, I had him for history as well. So, we had a range of class sizes, you know, in some of the major classes.

GN ([10:27](#)):

Did you have Dr. John Schroeder? Do you remember that name?

FW ([10:30](#)):

I do remember. Oh, yeah. He was big in the night school. He put that program together. And for English, I had, George Sommers, of course.

GN ([10:37](#)):

Oh, you did?

FW ([10:38](#)):

Oh yeah. Interesting man.

GN ([10:41](#)):

Milton Teichman? Dr. Tiechman.

FW ([10:44](#)):

Yeah. Well, I know him, but I don't know that I had him in the classroom.

GN ([10:47](#)):

Bob Lewis?

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FW ([10:49](#)):

I think I did. Yeah. I had the dreaded Dr. Drennen.

GN ([10:55](#)):

Oh, D.A. Drennen [laugh].

FW ([10:58](#)):

And his books [laugh].

GN ([11:00](#)):

Oh yeah. Did you join some of the book burning after the semester [laugh]?

FW ([11:05](#)):

Well, I don't recall doing that, literally, but--.

GN ([11:08](#)):

Yeah. Well, I--.

FW ([11:09](#)):

Interesting times.

GN ([11:10](#)):

I used to be laughing at that.

FW ([11:11](#)):



**Fred Weiss**

And of course, I also had at a point in time and I respected him just so, so, so much. Not only then, but years later as Andrew Molloy.

GN ([11:19](#)):

Oh, yes.

FW ([11:20](#)):

Wonderful science teacher.

GN ([11:21](#)):

Chemistry teacher, science, yeah. Okay. Larry Menapace. Is that a name that--.

FW ([11:29](#)):

Well, I know Larry.

GN ([11:30](#)):

You did.

FW ([11:30](#)):

I do. I do. I know him through athletics and I know him- well, extended athletics in later years.

Somewhat retirement. He and I played together on local softball leagues.

GN ([11:39](#)):

I see.

FW ([11:39](#)):

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I know his interest in coaching and what he's done there.

GN ([11:43](#)):

Yeah.

FW ([11:43](#)):

But I don't remember him as an instructor of mine.

GN ([11:45](#)):

Fine. I guess one of the questions I have here is what was the motivation for you to stay on here with the primitive status that we were in a campus that was forming and we'll talk about the athletic in just a minute, but everything was kind of primitive.

FW ([12:06](#)):

Sure.

GN ([12:07](#)):

Was there a spirit at the core or what is it that--.

FW ([12:11](#)):

Well for me, again, I go back to the roots. The roots of a country boy got through high school but didn't have a vision. We didn't have a family history of college being--.

GN ([12:24](#)):

Part of it.

**Fred Weiss**FW ([12:25](#)):

So, I didn't have a vision of that. It's not something you could say. I was working for year in, year out, there was some sense that at some point in my later years in high school, that basketball might draw me there. And yet I didn't pursue it, you know, when there was interest, like a call or knock on the door. I didn't pursue it. I was just kind of resigning myself to the world as I understood it and saw it at that point in time as the country boy. And, again, it was really following my brother's path a little bit in that he might have had more vision. He was a better student than myself, I would say. And he got into the Air Force, and he was in a pilot training program, but it was a kind of a program where you had the first six or nine months to kind of feel your way, fly the planes, and he just didn't go for it once he got that far into the planes. And he came out and he went right to Westchester Community College. And he did that for two years. So, he had an associates and he could have went out and got some kind of work at that time. But he then chose to transfer to Marist. So, we were here together. We overlapped during that, those two years. Which was '63 and '64. Graduating class of '64 is what I originally was in. I didn't graduate then. And I'll explain that in a moment. But so I was here from '60 fall, '61, '62. Then he came in at the end of that year and he did the two years. And then there was a chance we would've graduated together. In my particular case, I changed majors along the way as a math major, I mentioned before. And that became increasingly difficult for me as it went on. And I had a little bit more interest in the practical aspects of business, I think. And I switched to be a business major.

GN ([14:10](#)):

I see.

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FW ([14:11](#)):

And worked closely with Jack Kelly at the time.

GN ([14:14](#)):

I was going to say Jack Kelly.

FW ([14:15](#)):

Great instructor as well.

GN ([14:16](#)):

John Griffin. Do you know that name?

FW ([14:18](#)):

I do, I might have had him.

GN ([14:21](#)):

Jim Fay, he was an accountant. F-A-Y. Okay.

FW ([14:26](#)):

So, and then my brother graduated in '64 June and immediately was hired on by this growing metropolis down the road IBM.

GN ([14:35](#)):

Oh yeah.

FW ([14:35](#)):

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And so, then I come along that 1964 at one point thinking I would be graduating then. But in my third year or so, I switched the majors. And this is not a complaint per se because I'm well beyond it. But it was never clear that once I got to finish my major courses in business, the year and a half later that now I would also have to have had a language. That nobody ever mentioned that until I got the major courses done. And I said, okay, I'm here for my degree. Oh. But the registrar says, where's your language? What language? So, I got in a huff a little bit and went off for six, nine months or so and said, I don't need that. One of those kinds of attitudes.

GN ([15:24](#)):

I see.

FW ([15:25](#)):

And during this time, my brother was working for IBM and I went out and got a job too. But he was making \$135 a week, which is pretty good money at that time. He was hired on as a programmer. And he used to bring me in occasionally to the office, and he would show me things. And I was always good with puzzles and jumbles and things like that. I had a mind that could relate these things. And I said, that's what they pay you that for. I said, there's nothing to it. I can do that stuff. I want one of those. So, I went to IBM still didn't finish up the degree here.

GN ([15:57](#)):

I see.

FW ([15:57](#)):

And I said, I think I'd like one of those, and I'd be pretty good at that. What do you think? And they said we think you don't have a four-year degree and that's required for us to hire you into

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that kind of professional path. But we are hiring computer operators. You operate the machines with your hands, and it happens to be third shift, and we pay \$95 a week for that. Would you like one of those? So, I did one of those scratchers and finally concluded that was better than the odd jobs I was doing.

GN ([16:26](#)):

Yeah, I see.

FW ([16:26](#)):

So, I took that, and then I'm still smart enough to know this is stupid Fred, because all you need is six credits of a language.

GN ([16:33](#)):

Come on back.

FW ([16:33](#)):

Get in there this summer, get it and get your degree. And that's what happened in '66. I did the six credits, and in August I had a diploma in my hands. So, the only thing I really missed out on was the ceremony.

GN ([16:44](#)):

Oh, right. Oh, well that's not bad. And then you went back to IBM?

FW ([16:48](#)):

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Then I-- well, I was hired on by IBM was the operator, and I just stayed. And soon as I got the degree Gus, within a month they had me in programming school. Because they saw also, you know, I did good on the aptitude test and all that. They just had this requirement. You know, you have the four year degree. I got it. And I had a wonderful career.

GN ([17:04](#)):

Wonderful. Okay. Back to the athletic program. And that, which we did not have here. In fact, I'm not even sure, were we Division III in basketball at that time?

FW ([17:16](#)):

Well, we were division zero. We didn't have a team in the first year I was here. There was some interest by the students in putting together a team. So, they had like an intramural program. A fellow from the community, a man by the name of Gary Mendez. I presume it was voluntary. Maybe they got a few bucks. I don't know. But he agreed to come in and be an organizer, a coach for the group. I opted not-- I was asked to, and I opted not to join them because I was already playing out in the community for those years.

GN ([17:51](#)):

I see.

FW ([17:51](#)):

And the competition was good. The, you know, it was just good ball out there. And it wouldn't have been the same level of competitiveness here. There was no schedule or anything at that time. Although think they tried to grab a couple of schools. Then, brother Murphy became the AD, or maybe, or it was the AD. And he had a vision to want to begin to develop this thing. And

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he put together a schedule and hired a coach. First full-time coach was the, JV coach out of Poughkeepsie High School. A man by the name of George Strba. Okay. S-T-R-B-A.

GN ([18:25](#)):

I thought Tom White was in there someplace.

FW ([18:27](#)):

Well, I'll get to him [laugh]

GN ([18:28](#)):

Okay.

FW ([18:30](#)):

And he was actually the second year.

GN ([18:32](#)):

Okay.

FW ([18:33](#)):

So they had George Strba for one year.

GN ([18:35](#)):

I see.

FW ([18:36](#)):



**Fred Weiss**

Then they hired Tom. Dr. Foy did. And Tom was brought in as the admissions director and men's basketball coach. So, I played for Tom for two years. And then there was opportunity for Tom to do more in the admissions area. And he had to give up or chose to give up the basketball. So, they hired a young man out of school of University of Mass, not the University of Mass. Plymouth, Plymouth College up in Mass.

GN ([19:09](#)):

Phil Weston? Go ahead.

FW ([19:10](#)):

No, no. This is going to be, I just had it to give it to you. I forgot, Paul Harold.

Speaker 2 ([19:15](#)):

Oh, Paul. Okay. Yeah.

FW ([19:18](#)):

And he did crew also, he did crew and basketball. So, I had those three coaches in those years I was here. But in my case, it was the second, third, fourth year. And then, because I did stay on with the major change, I did have another year that I played--.

GN ([19:36](#)):

Eligibility. Yeah.

FW ([19:37](#)):

My whole career, I played only seventy-nine games.

**Fred Weiss**

GN ([19:41](#)):

Oh, okay.

FW ([19:42](#)):

Yeah. So, you know, we didn't play thirty games a year, like, or more like they do now. And you asked about were we division III, you know, people have asked me that a number of times, and I have no recollection of us being associated with a structured--.

GN ([19:59](#)):

NCAA organization.

FW ([20:00](#)):

So, I don't know if NCAA existed then, or if it did. Well, maybe we were three and I didn't know it, you know, I'm not sure about that part of things.

GN ([20:06](#)):

Well, the parallel would be the football, which was club football, you know, and just without having--.

FW ([20:12](#)):

Well, they didn't call us a club team at that point.

GN ([20:13](#)):

No, no.

FW ([20:14](#)):

**Fred Weiss**

But so I don't know.

GN ([20:16](#)):

Did you play in the Marist gym here or did you play in Lourdes High School?

FW ([20:20](#)):

Well, we practiced at Marian. That's where the basketball court was. And we'd have internal games against the brothers who were very, very good. You know, they often beat us handily. But the actual scheduled games, you know, one of my colleagues or friends recently indicated we had played a game here against one of those teams. I don't recall that, the games were generally at Lourdes, the old Lourdes High School, or some were at Poughkeepsie High School. And one or more were at Dutchess Community College. So that's where we played our games. And we had, during years I was there, I can't tell you exactly which years this was, but we played the likes of some of the current MAC teams. We played certainly Iona. We played Monmouth.

GN ([21:09](#)):

Alright.

FW ([21:10](#)):

We played Siena.

GN ([21:12](#)):

Oh, wow.

FW ([21:13](#)):

**Fred Weiss**

Yeah. So they began to fit in, not in my first year, maybe, but before I was done, we were playing them.

GN ([21:19](#)):

I see.

FW ([21:20](#)):

And then we played Bloomfield down below.

GN ([21:23](#)):

Okay.

FW ([21:23](#)):

You know, the various schools that--.

GN ([21:25](#)):

But even in those days with this, weren't the conditions rather primitive, mean the locker room or the--.

FW ([21:32](#)):

Oh gosh, yes.

GN ([21:33](#)):

Yeah. There was none [laugh]. I mean, there was a--.

FW ([21:36](#)):

**Fred Weiss**

Well, I don't remember what the-- I guess we must have had showers right here. Right? In Marian, I presume so. Yeah. But we, there was some interesting stories. I can't remember all of them. But my brother tells me a story, and I had forgotten this totally, but a few years ago, he brought it up and because he, at his high school reunion, he met somebody and he was talking to them, and he brought up this story. And apparently while Tom Wade was the coach, although Tom doesn't have a good recollection of it either, we were set to play somebody. And it was right after the grades came out and several folks were academically ineligible to play. So, we were shorthanded and as opposed to canceling the game, Tom, whoever it was, I think it was Tom, tried to bring on some additional students to play. And my brother was one of the ones he asked. He wasn't really quite an established basketball player, but he was big. He played intramural level. And he reminds me that he made the trip. You know, he was given a uniform, made the trip, and he said, I never got in the game, but I warmed up with you guys, [laugh]. And I was on the team for that one outing. And another story that Dave Flynn likes to remind me of is one of our games away. I think it was up in Massachusetts when the equipment was brought out for us there were no socks and none of us prepared for not being provided with socks by the, the person that takes care of the equipment. And the coach had to send somebody out to a sporting goods store [laugh], round up a bunch of socks and things. So that was an indication of the kind of ragtag team we might have been.

GN ([23:25](#)):

Yeah. Okay. Alright, moving on. I think part of what you have already told me is in this, I was going to say, that's the Marist experience now after Marist, and then yeah. Like your first, you know, what were those experiences like employment, but the employment is going to be IBM I suppose.

**Fred Weiss**

FW ([23:43](#)):

Yes, that was my career for thirty-two years.

GN ([23:45](#)):

Alright. And then, during this time now, after you finished graduating from Marist, how did you get back to Marist? What was the magnet that brought you back that you would be involved in the Red Fox Club or, you know, the athletic program here or--.

FW ([24:06](#)):

Yeah, you know, it took some years because, I guess it was a combination of factors at play. Certainly, one was a little bit of an uncomfortableness on my part about the change in the major and--.

GN ([24:21](#)):

And the requirement for the--.

FW ([24:22](#)):

And the requirement and the delay. So that certainly was in the mix a little bit. And after I was married and we began, we had children, I was still involved in lots of sports out in the community. A lot of basketball leagues then became--.

GN ([24:41](#)):

Where are you living during this period of time?

FW ([24:44](#)):

**Fred Weiss**

Well, after the first year of marriage, we lived up in Hyde Park the first year. And then we bought a home over in LaGrange. And our first daughter was born before we got to the house in LaGrange. And then the other two daughters later on. So, all three grew up in the Arlington school district in LaGrange.

GN ([24:59](#)):

Yeah, alright. I was going to say what kind of brought you back, but eventually you do cross that stream again and you come back to visiting us.

FW ([25:14](#)):

And I'll tell you, I have a distinct memory of how that began to occur. And there was a fellow on staff in the development office by the name of Ron Zerwick (?). You probably know him, right?

GN ([25:27](#)):

Yeah.

FW ([25:28](#)):

And Ron reached out to me and began to involve me in some basics with the Phonathons and stuff.

GN ([25:37](#)):

Oh, yes. Yeah.

FW ([25:38](#)):

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Right. Give support to some of that kind of thing. And that just began, you know, making new connections. The school, I thought from that point on, would always kind of go overboard to make me feel wanted, to feel comfortable to involve me where they thought I could be, you know, help to them. I was willing to do that kind of thing. One year I ran a sub part of the annual fundraiser program. I did a-- the IBM group, we defined it as, you know.

GN ([26:14](#)):

I see.

FW ([26:14](#)):

So, I headed that up a little bit. So it was that kind of thing. And around, I guess that time, or maybe even later thereafter, I was aware of the sporting stuff going on with the school from the papers and from living in the community, but we weren't here living it. But now our children were beginning to grow up. And at a very young age, we as a family began to live it. Particularly in the basketball front. You know, we started to get into the red fox club when that was created and had season tickets and every home game, that was the thing that the Weiss family did. And even got to the point where we coordinated a couple of vacation trips to coincide to a Marist schedule. One time in California, you know.

GN ([26:59](#)):

Oh, wow.

FW ([26:59](#)):



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The five of us were out there to go a game there. Another case in Florida, you know. The kids have such great memories of all of that. So, we were there then before, you know, Rick came on and all that period of time.

GN ([27:13](#)):

Yeah. Ron Petro was the coach.

FW ([27:15](#)):

Well see, Ron was at Manhattan when I was at Marist here. So, we overlapped just a little bit. But then when he was hired on, I was already disconnected from Marist, so I didn't know him well in the earliest years. But he actually, and you know, the athletic department did bring me back and honored me at some basketball game with a plaque and the first thousand point player and all. So that's how I began to get connected with Ron a little bit. You know, and then--.

GN ([27:45](#)):

That was a great team effort there, that athletic group, as it were. You had Ron, you had Harry Goldman, you had Bill Austin, you know, and they kind of really worked together in different activities. I mean, one had the crew and the thing, and one had soccer and--.

FW ([28:05](#)):

Yes, I should have brought Dr. Goldman's name in earlier because we were good friends, I thought after Marist experience. And he did a lot for the school after Bill Murphy, Dr. Murphy. Yeah. And yeah.

GN ([28:19](#)):

**Fred Weiss**

Alright. Marist is a different place today.

FW ([28:24](#)):

Absolutely [laugh]. Who would've thunk?

GN ([28:28](#)):

Exactly. How do you explain it?

FW ([28:30](#)):

Well, I don't know. I just, I bubble up with pride when I try to talk about it with people, you know, and you just don't know, you say to people. You just can't imagine, you know, what it was like. And then I quickly acknowledge I probably wouldn't be able to be here now, but I was then, and I feel so much a part of-- I really do feel a part of what's here now--.

GN ([28:52](#)):

And rightly so.

FW ([28:53](#)):

It's because of you and me and others that went through that other building process, right. You guys more literally than us, but.

GN ([28:58](#)):

Yeah. I tell people, you know, these hands built that chapel, I was up there. I can tell you about the purlin and that's the things between them and how they had to slip in and it was dangerous. There was no net. Be careful up there, brother. Thank you [laugh]. You know? But the-- one of

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the things that, you know, that comes to mind is the leadership. Dennis Murray has a place, but it's not Dennis Murray alone. I mean, one man could not do this.

FW ([29:26](#)):

Right. Exactly.

GN ([29:28](#)):

And you say, well, what is it then? Is it the buildings? Is it the campus? Is it the student body? Is it what-- how, where do you feel?

FW ([29:37](#)):

I don't know who you give the greatest credit to, but it's all those parts. Like, I often say in different ways that the whole is greater than some of the parts, you know? Dennis came in after me, but again, I was back into the community and was aware of the work he's done. He's done a tremendous job, you know, and he was successful in getting very dedicated board people.

GN ([30:07](#)):

Yeah. That's, yeah. Right. Yeah.

FW ([30:08](#)):

That's such a key part, I suppose. I think.

GN ([30:10](#)):

Absolutely.

FW ([30:11](#)):

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And the core set of alumni that there always has been that were very committed to it, far more than me in the earlier days. I know too. You know, and I, and I consider a lot of them now friends and met a lot of new friends and--. You know, it's rare that you find a block of people that have a bunch of negative things to say about their experience and what the school has become.

GN ([30:36](#)):

Yeah. And I mean, going back to Linus Foy and even Paul Ambrose before him, I mean, I tell the story of the history of Marist. It's, you know, Paul Ambrose came here in 1946 with a BA, an MA degree in library science, and we had a two-year college and it says see if you can make this a four year college, so we don't have to go to Fordham to finish our degrees. You know? And in five years-- now, he had no secretary, he had no fund, he had no, he typed with two fingers, you know, and he made out all the applications, sent them off to Albany. He had no legal advice other than what he would have to get to for signing a document or thing, you know? So, it's an incredible birth story, you know? And then Foy comes along next to it with more of an academic vision. And, you know, insisting on certain things academically that, you know.

FW ([31:33](#)):

My wife will love that story because she was in elementary education, a library, you know, teacher, a librarian, and nobody referred to themselves formally. But yeah, she'd love that story.

GN ([31:46](#)):

And then again, you know, the buildings here, that to me, that's one aspect of it. And how did this happen? I mean, you know, they, Dennis has certainly a vision of putting up a substantial

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structure, you know, incidental note on the side, I can remember Linus Foy was late for a meeting with his, I don't know what you'd call them. They weren't the trustees yet, but there was a group of faculty and administrators administrative meeting. He was home cutting the rug, cutting out a rug for his living room. I mean, he did it physically himself, you know, that's not the same president that we have now [laugh], in terms of the difference in the way it was. Another area that could contrast would be sports. I mean, did you know Rik Smits [laugh]?

FW ([32:43](#)):

Oh, yeah. I got to meet him. He was a wonderful man and he represents--.

GN ([32:47](#)):

Yeah, I had him as a student, and he was a very gentle guy, you know, and clever enough. I mean, he was not slow by any means, you know, and language was not a problem. He managed to get through with it, you know, so that--we've gone to the NCAA twice or three times with him right there on the men's division, which was quite a leap forward. And now we go annually with the girls.

FW ([33:13](#)):

That's right. Yeah.

GN ([33:14](#)):

You explain that to me.

FW ([33:15](#)):

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Yeah. Well, there's something there, there's a core there with the women's program that is somewhat self-sustaining, and they got the great leader, I think, and Brian Giorgis, you know. I was well aware of his high school coaching experience. And my daughters did go to some camps that he ran. And so, I've known him for many, many years, and I thought that was a great hire, and he is doing a wonderful job.

GN ([33:40](#)):

Yeah. I guess it's a kind of a magnet effect that they managed to draw, like unlike, you know, that-- you wanted, you know, it's not the biggest school, but if you want to be able to play, we give you a chance, you know. And you might find your way going into the NCAA, you know, so that--.

FW ([33:59](#)):

And doesn't it seem that some of the introduction of some new majors along the way helped bring in some people that you wouldn't have?

GN ([34:08](#)):

Right.

FW ([34:08](#)):

Otherwise, I think of Rachele Fitz, for example with fashion.

GN ([34:13](#)):

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

FW ([34:14](#)):

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She was intent on fashion and then basketball. If you didn't have that major, wouldn't have had her, you know?

GN ([34:20](#)):

Right.

FW ([34:21](#)):

There's other examples like that.

GN ([34:22](#)):

And now fashion is one of the hottest programs to get into. Yeah. You just can't come and apply. You got to bring your profile. What have you created? And, you know, what, how are you with CAD? I happened to be the chairman of the communications at the time when they wanted to, for CAD-- computer assistant design, so that the machine itself, you cut the thing four inches long, it knows it should take off four inches off the bottom. You know, I mean, the whole concept of-- as I said, a whole new major that we knew. We would not ordinarily have.

FW ([35:01](#)):

Well, I know CAD, CAD/CAM, I don't know how personally to use it, but I was in computer services and the lab in Poughkeepsie and within the lab, that was a very major design tool that they used in hardwood design.

GN ([35:13](#)):

Yeah. Also in biology, but biology, we went on to med tech and, you know, there's a whole other area of development of students, different range of students who have different kinds of qualities.

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I can't remember Richard LaPietra talking about a chemistry major who played basketball, which is a tough thing to do here. I mean, you know, to be majoring in such things.

FW ([35:39](#)):

I should have mentioned his name earlier as well. In fact, he's the one I had for chemistry. I had Linus Foy, I mean, Andrew Molloy for physics, I guess it was. But I had Dr. LaPietra.

GN ([35:51](#)):

How about Brian Desilets?

FW ([35:53](#)):

Yeah, I know the name. I know I met him, but I don't think I had him in the classroom. I don't think so.

GN ([35:59](#)):

You know, he wasn't here--. Well, he was here ten years, which is a lot in some ways, but it's not like forty years, which, you know, you have an experience of ranging over that period of time.

FW ([36:08](#)):

Yeah. But even a brother that was in training here at the time that I played basketball against, always stood out in my mind because he is a big man and he ended up being Brother John. Last name being what--? He went to Lourdes after here.

GN ([36:26](#)):

Oh, yeah.



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FW ([36:26](#)):

And my wife and her family all went through Lourdes. So, she knew him in that context. She's a few years younger than myself. And I don't remember if he was an instructor or a principal at some point over there. But he was over there, you know?

GN ([36:41](#)):

Well, tell me a few things about, well, I might ask of your achievement in your own life. Like, at IBM where you were what is that, the twenty-five year award. You get one of those.

FW ([36:53](#)):

Yeah. Everybody that's employed for twenty-five years, you join a quarter century club, they call it. And you're honored that way. Yeah, you know, I--.

GN ([37:02](#)):

You recently got an award for sports.

FW ([37:05](#)):

I did.

GN ([37:06](#)):

Yeah. And what was that about?

FW ([37:09](#)):

Well, the MAC conference-- that didn't exist for us way back when I played. But the MAC conference now does honor one male and one female athlete, basketball athlete at an affair up at

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the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. And for the last several years, the MAC has held its annual end of the season tournament there. And they decided they'd like to honor folks in the manner I just said. And they arrange for a space. So, they have a large room where they have displays of all the teams in the MAC and then they hold this gala dinner affair. It's a wonderful affair. And in fact, it just began three years ago. Rik Smits received it, appropriately so, the first year, I was so honored the second year, which was a big, big thrill for me.

GN ([38:03](#)):

I bet. Yeah.

FW ([38:04](#)):

And my family. And this past year, Mike Hart was who was a good friend and was a friend before this occurred, so I was happy for him as well. So, yeah. So that's a special honor academically. But as far as the career goes at IBM, I stayed in the community. I did all my thirty-two years here in Dutchess County. There were a couple of occasions where I was either asked to look at work elsewhere, or I initiated looking elsewhere. So, there were some opportunities to, you know, job opportunities in Atlanta at one time and Kentucky another time. But it always came back to the family, you know, I always-- I got a lot of roots in me, and--.

GN ([38:48](#)):

I bet there are here.

FW ([38:49](#)):

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Yeah. And my wife grew up here. I grew up here. The family connections were here. Our social network was here, the children were in school. And I got so far in one case where I accepted a job, and this was after family conversation. I decided to accept one, and then I didn't sleep on it well enough to stick with it. And I said, this is just not the right decision for my family in the long run, you know? So, we didn't do it. It didn't really hurt my career. It wasn't that, and IBM is often known as I've been moved. But I was so fortunate to be part of a company during its heyday. It's different now, but it was growing, expanding. I fell under the mentorship of a certain individual who liked what I could offer. And as his part of the business expanded, I always found myself being tugged along by him.

GN ([39:41](#)):

I see.

FW ([39:42](#)):

And I would have more and more responsibility, you know, so I, you know, I guess you would say that the highest-level position I had there was a third line management position with several hundred employees and, you know, \$7 million budget, that kind of thing.

GN ([39:56](#)):

Okay. Alright. I'm just checking our time here, but I have one new series of questions I really want to ask because I want to get your feed on it now, considering the time in which we live and where Marist campus is now, et cetera. But it's a basic question, kind of a philosophical one about, put this way, is college worth the investment today? And you think about it in terms of the financial that people will have to put forward in money. You think of the time that you have to

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spend going for the four years, you think of the effort that's involved in doing the papers and doing the readings and tending the classes and so on. So unbalance, you know, take a crack at it.

What would you say about it?

FW ([40:47](#)):

Well, I think the answer is yes and no because you stated it in a somewhat general generic frame, which is appropriate. And you put into the context of secondary education but that education doesn't have to be in every case at a \$60,000 per year school. Right? It could be at a school that's 5,000 or less than 10,000 or something like that. Right? In my own experience, I mean, I knew a lot of families that very specifically opted to have their children go to a two-year community college for the first two years of education. It tests the child, right, at a reasonable cost. And it prepares them, in many cases, we thought with Duchess prepared them well, to then step on to whatever's there for them. And it isn't for everybody, you know? You know, college-- parts of college is probably useful for everybody. But so it's a mixed bag and it's a tough choice.

GN ([41:51](#)):

And that's taking the financial aspect of it, specifically investing this amount of money in terms of those things. But, on the next, again, another point, you're really touching on, maybe we don't need four years of academic college courses. Maybe two years would be enough. And then two years of practical engineering. Or how to use a level or, you know, a saw, what's a wrench? You know, the kind of practical applications you have to be smart in this day and age to handle that stuff, I believe.

FW ([42:25](#)):

**Fred Weiss**

Yeah. I mean, like in my own experience, I thought after my two to three years collection of academics, I was quite a good candidate for work in the IBM environment that I ultimately got into. But the conditions at the time were for those kind of companies. Our line is four-year degree. I was no better person or different when I got that thing in my hand. I don't think than I was before. So maybe it's too arbitrary in some of those kinds of cases. And yeah, maybe we do need more of those mid-range options for people.

GN ([43:06](#)):

You hear about the need for more computer skills or development that students aren't prepared to be able to fill the jobs that are available out there. What kind of jobs are they that the world that is being offered, you know?

FW ([43:22](#)):

Well, I mean, information technology world is intertwined in lots of things. Almost everything, you know? It's not just in building a new computer, a faster computer. Or in operating the services of computers. It's in the medical field, right. It's in the legal field. It's in all these different fields. So, math and science and computer engineering insight is invaluable, I guess to our competitiveness in the world. Certainly, when we look at ourselves against perhaps the Chinese and other examples like that, we tend to fall behind that it seems, doesn't it? And so, we need to be investing in those areas. We need to entice people into them.

GN ([44:13](#)):

Would you say something too about now the-- maybe the social development as a result of your going to college? You're no longer just a farm boy from upstate New York. I mean, you have a

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much more, or have had the experience of a broadening of many new friends, I would imagine, from different backgrounds, you know.

FW ([44:33](#)):

Yes, absolutely. That I wouldn't have otherwise for sure. So, I feel like I'm a more complete person as a result. So much of me is still, I can see it as I look inside me is still that country boy. It really is. But around it, I've had so many wonderful experiences that I would not have had without the college experience and being lucky enough to be in the community where I could continue to have those relationships with folks that have the very same similar experience of the same college, if you will. And I find myself reconnecting with alumni that I knew and some I didn't know, but you find you have other commonalities that you're connecting. So, yeah.

GN ([45:23](#)):

What are your best joys now?

FW ([45:27](#)):

Probably still with my children, of course, my grandchildren, now I have grandchildren to joy over. In fact, we're getting ready to have them come up for a couple of weeks here, after the next week. And we look forward to that every summer. We do have the opportunity to relax some in Florida in the winter. And, they have often come there to see us. So, one week a year. So, you know, it's, it's family in one form or another. I am very fortunate, very, very fortunate to have the health that I can still do an awful lot physically. So, I'm very active athletically, you know, I play golf, I do golf. I play other court games. We have a game called pickleball. You may or may not have heard about.

**Fred Weiss**

GN ([46:11](#)):

Oh, yes. In the villages. Oh, yes.

FW ([46:14](#)):

Well, it's not only in the villages. We play it here at my local condominium complex as well. In fact, I'm playing tonight. I'm going to have a couple of guys that I've never played before come and because they've shown an interest in wanting to do it, so we're going to work out a little bit tonight. So, I'm really fortunate to be able to do that. You know, you have some medical bumps along the way, but minor compared to lots of other examples of what people have to go through.

GN ([46:39](#)):

Wonderful.

FW ([46:39](#)):

So, I'm very fortunate in that regard, still.

GN ([46:42](#)):

Now tell me, is there something here that I didn't ask you that you think, I guess you should know this. I mean, in terms of-- I think you've had a pretty good ride by and large. Marist was part of it. But IBM was another bigger part I think. And the Hudson Valley has provided you with a nice home.

FW ([47:01](#)):

It has. Yeah. I mean, I can't think of anything specific. I didn't come with a list of make sure Gus knows these things, kind of things. So, nothing's popping to my head right now in that regard. I

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mean, it's, the campus is such a beautiful place to see. You wonder how much more can be done, you know, what more would they want to do? Where are they going do it? With the boundaries of the acreage and stuff.

GN ([47:26](#)):

What's your favorite drink?

FW ([47:28](#)):

Oh, I'm usually a red wine man. Yeah. Like that. But then--.

GN ([47:32](#)):

Yeah, I just say that because brother Joseph Belanger was a subject of a conversation before you came in. And he was with this brother Sean Sammon who was the permission at the time. And after an interview, he said, would you like to have a drink? And so, the brother said, yeah, I'm going to have a seven up. No, I mean a drink [laugh]. You know, so just, you know, for him at that time, it was the only one way that I look at it. And he was not an alcoholic. But just the expression that, you know, would you have a drink? That's the way we go. Well, Fred, it's been very nice talking to you. I've seen you around a lot, but I never had a chance to get this side of you so completely. And what you've said now will be recorded in our archives and hopefully more use will be made of it. How and when. I couldn't tell you, but I know it will.

FW ([48:23](#)):

Well, I've enjoyed talking to you. It's good to get to know you a little bit better too.

GN ([48:26](#)):



**Fred Weiss**

Thank you very much. Okay.